

**Remarks at a White House Coronavirus Task Force Press Briefing**  
*April 1, 2020*

*The President.* Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. So America continues to wage all-out war to defeat the virus—this horrible, horrible virus. You see how terrible it is, especially when you look at the numbers from yesterday. And we explained why we're extending our nationwide guidelines to slow the spread by 30 days.

Together, we have the power to save countless lives. We're attacking the virus on every front with social distancing, economic support for our workers, rapid medical intervention, and very serious innovation, and banning dangerous foreign travel that threatens the health of our people. And we did that early, far earlier than anyone would have thought and way ahead of anybody else.

In this time of need, I know that every American will do their patriotic duty and help us to achieve a total victory. As governments and nations focus on the coronavirus, there's a growing threat that cartels, criminals, terrorists, and other malign actors will try to exploit the situation for their own gain. And we must not let that happen. We will never let that happen.

Today the United States is launching enhanced counternarcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to protect the American people from the deadly scourge of illegal narcotics. We must not let the drug cartels exploit the pandemic to threaten American lives.

In cooperation with the 22 partner nations, U.S. Southern Command will increase surveillance, disruption, and seizures of drug shipments and provide additional support for eradication efforts, which are going on right now at a record pace. We're deploying additional Navy destroyers, combat ships, aircraft, and helicopters; Coast Guard cutters; and Air Force surveillance aircraft, doubling our capabilities in the region. Very importantly, our forces are fully equipped with personnel protective equipment, and we've taken additional safety measures to ensure our troops remain healthy.

Secretary Mark Esper, Attorney General Bill Barr, National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien will provide more details. In addition, I'm going to have General Milley, who has done an incredible job in so many ways, say a few words. And also with us are Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gilday, who you know—I think you know—and Commandant of the Coast Guard Admiral Schultz.

So I'm going to ask Mark to start, and then we can go. And after that, we're going to take questions as it pertains to this. And then, we'll go onto phase two, which is the virus itself. Okay?

Thank you, please. Mark.

*Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper.* Well, thank you, Mr. President. And good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today as we make this very important announcement. At a time when the Nation and the Department of Defense are focused on protecting the American people from the spread of the coronavirus, we also remain vigilant to the many other threats our country faces.

*[At this point, Secretary Esper continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

Mr. President, thank you for your leadership as we begin this important operation. While the men and women of the United States military work hard here at home to fight the coronavirus, we continue to take action around the world to defend our great country.

Thank you, and now I'd like to invite General Milley.

*Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark A. Milley, USA.* Yes, sir. Thank you, Secretary, for those words. And thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership. And I want to publicly thank Admiral Craig Faller, the Commander of the U.S. Southern Command out of Miami, for leading this operation, which is underway effective today; and also Admiral Gilday, the Chief of Naval Operations; and Admiral Schultz—for their contributions to this from their services. There's thousands of sailors, coast guardsmen, soldiers, airmen, marines involved in this operation.

*[Chairman Milley continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

The bottom line is: You're not going to get through. Now is not the time to try to penetrate the United States with illegal drugs to kill Americans. We're the United States military, and we will defend our country, regardless of the cost.

Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Secretary.

*The President.* Thank you very much, General. Beautiful. Thank you.

Bill.

*Attorney General William P. Barr.* Thank you, Mr. President, and thanks for your decisive leadership as we confront this unprecedented challenge posed by coronavirus. And I'd like to thank you for your support for this important initiative and thank all of—the Secretary of Defense and all the Services for taking on this important initiative.

*[Attorney General Barr continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

You know, this drug war has gone on for many decades. And at times in the past, we've had great success and great results. And at times, we've taken our eye off the ball, fortunately, not in this administration. And I'm grateful that you, Mr. President, have brought focus to this fight and the determination to use whatever tools are necessary to win the fight. The cartels have to be defeated, both for the people of this country and for the people of Mexico and Venezuela.

So I'd like to thank you again, Mr. President, Secretary Esper, for providing the wherewithal required to help win this war against the cartels and others who seek to send illicit drugs into our country. And, with that, I'd like to introduce Ambassador O'Brien.

*The President.* Thank you.

*National Security Adviser Robert C. O'Brien.* Thank you, General. Thank you, Mr. President. Today's action is another example of the bold leadership of President Trump and his commitment to protecting the homeland against threats that seek to destabilize the United States and our Western Hemisphere.

The uncontrolled flow of illegal drugs into the United States poisons our communities; fuels the dangerous epidemic—epidemic of addiction; and threatens the safety and security of all Americans.

*[National Security Adviser O'Brien continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

Our adversaries should take note, however: This President has a clear-eyed focus on America's national security's—security interest. And let me be clear, it would be a mistake—a mistake with terrible consequences—for any adversary to attempt to do us harm during this health crisis or ever, for that matter.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Okay. So do we have any questions on this? Because this group is going to go back to work. They're going to leave.

John [John Roberts, Fox News], please.

### *Illegal Drug Interdiction Efforts*

*Q.* A question either for you, Mr. President, or Secretary Esper: What has changed that is allowing these assets to be deployed now, whereas, as General Barr said, in the past, they were not available?

*The President.* Well, for a long time, we've had a lot of drugs coming into our country. And it's not that it's increased, it's probably—we've probably got it down a little bit, but it's still a tremendous number. Families are being ruined. Lives are being ruined. It's an incredible thing, especially as you're at this position. You would never believe it. I see things that nobody would believe. I see reports that nobody would believe.

So I met with the group behind me, all of them, and we said, "What do you think we can do?" And they think they can interdict. They think that we can stop it before it gets to the shores. And they're coming from all over the place. And we have incredibly talented people.

So I think I'm going to let Mark just give a little bit of an answer to that. But we just want to see if we can stop a big—a good percentage of the drugs coming into our country.

*Secretary Esper.* Sure thing. Thanks, Mr. President.

So, first of all, it's simply a matter of prioritization. The President has giving us very clear guidance on what's important to him and protecting the American people. And, as some of you know, I've began—I began a review months ago, looking at all of our different geographic combatant commands and looking at where we can free up time, money, and resources to put into other endeavors.

In this case, we had scrutinized our inventory fairly closely. The—Chairman Milley did a great deal of work on this Admiral Gilday. And we felt that there was no risk to the fleet, to our operations to free up, in this case, naval ships. We also freed up aircraft and other assets to apply them to this Presidential priority. And of course, the Coast Guard did the same. So it was a very good operation. We feel this is very important to the American people and completely in line with the President's direction.

*Q.* And how long will you be able to keep up this operational tempo?

*Secretary Esper.* Well, it depends. What we're going to do is, we're going to run it for some matter of time. I'm not going to disclose how long that will be. And then, we will assess it, and then we will make adjustments from there. We may increase. We may decrease. We may sustain as is. But this will be an assessment we will do as an interagency team. We will report back to the President. And we'll take further guidance from there.

*The President.* And you know, we didn't do it for this reason, but it will also have an impact on the virus, because we have people trying to get in. So not only drugs, but now we have a new phenomena. And that's at least for the next, hopefully, short period of time—the virus. So we'll be able to have an effect on that too.

Please.

### *Illegal Drug Interdiction Efforts/Border Security*

*Q.* Yes. Mr. President, could you expand on that a little bit? Because you tie it to COVID-19, saying that these drug cartels were taking advantage of the situation, of this pandemic.

*The President.* That's right. They were.

*Q.* How exactly——

*The President.* Well, because we're focused on so many other parts of the country, and even parts of the world. And, all of a sudden, areas where we had it clamped down pretty tight, in all fairness. You know, the wall is up to about 160 miles already. And any areas where we have that wall, it's, for the most part, contiguous. We have fill-ins. But we're up to 161 miles exactly.

And any place where you have that wall, other than walking around it on the edges, it's stopping everybody cold. I mean, we're stopping—we're—nobody has seen anything like it. That's how good it works. And the other side knew it worked that well—everybody. Because everybody was for it 5 years ago. All of a sudden, they changed. It's having a tremendous impact.

But we are now focused on so many different things because of what's happened, because of this horrible—I say it's a horrible phenomena that now we've got to focus on drugs. And the drugs come in from different methods. And we have the best people at sea anywhere in the world, so we'll have a tremendous impact on drugs.

But one of the other things: We'll also have an impact, we think on the virus.

Okay? Yes. Please.

#### *Coronavirus Reporting by China/China-U.S. Trade*

*Q.* Ambassador O'Brien, did China underreport both the number of cases and the death toll from the coronavirus? And if that's the case, Mr. President, what does that mean for our relationship with China and your relationship with President Xi?

*National Security Adviser O'Brien.* Well, number one, I think the President has a great relationship with President Xi. And we'd like to have a great relationship with China. Unfortunately, we are just not in a position to confirm any of the numbers that are coming out of China. There's no way to confirm any of those numbers.

There's lots of public reporting on whether the numbers are too low. You've got access to those reports that are coming out of the Chinese social media and some of the few reporters that are left in China. We just have no way to confirm any of those numbers. Thank you.

*The President.* We really don't know. I mean, yes—look, how do we know whether if they underreported or reported however they report?

But we had a great call the other night. We're working together on a lot of different things, including trade. They're buying a lot. They're spending a lot of money and they're giving it to our farmers. They're paying our farmers for the product. So you know, we're going to continue that along.

John. Yes.

#### *Iran/Iraq/U.S. Counterterrorism Efforts*

*Q.* I have another one, sir. You tweeted earlier today that there was—you have uncovered intelligence that there is a sneak attack being planned against American troops, American assets in Iraq. Are we talking about Kataib Hezbollah again? Also——

*The President.* I know what you're saying, but we just have information that they were planning something. And it's very good information. It was led by Iran—not necessarily Iran, but by groups supported by Iran. But that, to me, is Iran. And we're just saying: "Don't do it. Don't do it." It would be a very bad thing for them if they did it.

*Q.* The last time they did do it in early March, at Camp Taji, there was a response from the military against Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Hezbollah alone. Your tweets——

*The President.* That was a very powerful response, by the way. That response knocked out five different places, but it also took out a lot of very bad people.

*Q.* Your tweets seemed to suggest though that if it happens again, it may go up the food chain.

*The President.* Well, that was a very big response. You know, we knocked out a lot. We looked—they hit one site; we hit five big ones and ammunition sites. You saw the—you saw what happened. And I won't say how many people were killed, but some bad people were killed. And a lot of them. That was a big response. But this response will be bigger if they do something.

Yes. You had one. Please.

#### *Coronavirus Reporting by China/China-U.S. Trade*

*Q.* Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. Just going back to your conversation with President Xi, I'm wondering if you received an intelligence report that talked about the discrepancy in the numbers and if you addressed that with President Xi?

*The President.* We have not received that. But their numbers seem to be a little bit on the light side. And I'm being nice when I say that, relative to what we witnessed and what was reported.

But we discussed that with him, not so much the numbers, as what they did and how they're doing. And we're in constant communication with—I mean, I would say the biggest communication is myself and President Xi. The relationship is very good.

We have—look, they're spending—they will be spending, when things even out—this is obviously a little bit of a hurdle, what's happened over the last month. But they'll be spending \$250 billion, buying our product: \$50 billion to the farmers alone, \$200 billion to other things. They never did that before. So we have a great trade deal. And we'd like to keep it, they'd like to keep it, and the relationship is good.

As to whether or not their numbers are accurate, I'm not an accountant from China.

#### *Coronavirus Outbreak in China/China-U.S. Relations*

*Q.* Does this strain things at all, in terms of the trade deal?

*The President.* No, because people just don't know. People don't know—where did it come from? I think we all understand where it came from. And President Xi understands that. And we don't have to make a big deal out of it.

We didn't like the fact that they said it came from our soldiers. And they haven't pursued that. It was—and that was a mid-level person said that. That was not a high-level person, so I assume. I will always assume the best. I'll assume the high-level people didn't know about it. It was a foolish statement.

So look, the relationship with China is a good one, and my relationship with him is, you know, really good.

Please.

#### *China's Response to Global Pandemic/U.S. Production of Medical Supplies and Equipment/U.S. Foreign Aid*

*Q.* Can I follow up just on that point on Chinese propaganda that you mentioned, as well as Ambassador O'Brien? So in the past several weeks, China has been shipping PPEs—you know, masks.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* They've either been selling or donating everywhere—Africa, Europe, Italy, Russia—and really pushing this narrative that they're taking on a global leadership role in the crisis. So what are your thoughts on that? And is there any plan for the administration to take on that role?

*The President.* Well, I don't mind if they want it. Yes. I view that as a positive, if they're helping other countries. We have 151 countries right now that are under siege by the virus. Under siege. Some are doing really badly. You know, they don't know about social distancing. These are countries that aren't highly sophisticated. They don't have great communication with the rest of the world. I mean, they don't know the things that we're doing and that some others are able to do.

And if China can help them, I'm all for it. I'm for all of us helping everybody. We're soon going to have more ventilators than we need. We're building thousands of ventilators right now. Now, it takes a period of time to build them. And again, nobody could have known a thing like this could happen. We're building thousands. We will fairly soon be at a point where we have far more than we can use, even after we stockpile for some future catastrophe, which we hope doesn't happen.

We're going to be distributing them—the extras—around the world. We'll go to Italy, we'll go to France. It will go to Spain, which is in—you know, very hard hit.

#### *U.S. Foreign Aid/Availability of Medical Supplies and Equipment*

*Q.* Just to follow up on that note: Is there any truth on reporting that your administration is stopping shipment of USAID stockpiles of PPEs abroad?

*The President.* No. No, truth whatsoever.

*Q.* So your administration is not——

*The President.* No, we want—I would love China and other countries, if they have additional supplies, medical supplies, to give to other countries. A hundred and fifty-one—151——

*Q.* So at this time, the U.S. is still shipping to USAID?

*The President.* Why would I stop that? Wouldn't that be terrible to stop it?

*Q.* No, I mean, is the U.S. stopping shipment of our own stockpile, through USAID, to other countries?

*The President.* No. Whatever we have, whatever we've committed to, we commit. But we also need a lot for ourselves, so we're very focused on that until we get over this. So obviously, we're not going to be shipping too much until—now, we do have excess of certain things, and we don't have enough of others.

I just had a great talk today with the—Doug McMillon, from Walmart. And I gave him a very, very big order to—for gowns, for protective gear for the doctors, for the nurses, for everything. And he's actually very excited about it. He's the biggest purchaser of this kind of thing, I mean, of anything probably in the world. And he is very excited about it.

And he said, "What size?" I said, "It's almost unlimited." When you look at these hospitals, the amount that they order, you almost say, "How could they possibly use so much, whether it's masks or the protective gear?" But we are supplying a tremendous amount, and we just ordered a lot from Walmart. And he's taken this on personally. And I said, "Let it go ship—let it be shipped

not to a warehouse, directly to the side of the hospital or wherever they need it," because we save a lot of time when we do that.

So Walmart, in addition to many other companies and people, is now involved at the highest level.

Please.

### *Illegal Drug Interdiction Efforts/Border Security*

*Q.* The announcements that were made today are aimed at curbing the flow of narcotics into the country. Are you concerned that we're possibly losing ground on the drug crisis while we're combating——

*The President.* No, I don't think we're losing ground, but we don't want to lose ground. That's why we're doing it. I don't want to lose ground. This is a big fight.

I've seen many families where they're wiped out, because they lost a son or a daughter, or a husband or a wife, or whatever—or all of them. And we don't want to lose ground. And we are heavily focused on the virus. Very heavily focused. And with this, we have never—after this goes into effect, which essentially is now, we will never have been so focused on drugs coming into our country as we are right now.

And remember, as that wall gets bigger, that really helps us a lot. It really helps us a lot.

Yes, please.

### *Mexico-U.S. Counternarcotics and Immigration Enforcement Cooperation/Border Security*

*Q.* Is the Mexican Government or any other Latin American government working in conjunction with this operation to help with that drug——

*The President.* Many of the governments are, and Mexico, in particular, is. And Mexico, right now, has—we have 27,000 Mexican soldiers on our southern border, keeping people out of our country. And we're—very few people are coming into our country right now.

And as we complete, again, the wall, in addition to the 27,000 soldiers, it's—it's a very—it's a very tough place to come into. When I took over, people were coming in, and they were bringing whatever they wanted. They were bringing drugs of any type, and now it's very hard for them. And it will get harder and harder.

*Q.* How much——

*The President.* But the President of Mexico is a great guy who's really helped us a lot: 27,000 soldiers—27,000 Mexican soldiers.

And you remember when I first took over, they had all of the caravans coming up with 10,000, 15,000 people in the caravans. They were marching through Mexico. That's not happening anymore.

Please, in the back.

### *Drug Trafficking*

*Q.* Mr. President, are narcomilitants such as the FARC 57th Front out of Colombia or the Maduro regime—do you know if they're working in conjunction with the Mexican cartels? Is there any intelligence indicating that?

*The President.* I cannot tell you that. I can—I know the answer to that. I believe I do. But I cannot tell you that. We have information that would lead us to believe something very powerfully, but I cannot tell you the answer to that.

Yes, please. Jeff [Jeff Mason, Reuters].

#### *Iraq/U.S. Military Forces in Iraq*

*Q.* Mr. President, have U.S. forces in Iraq taken any precautions because of this particular attack?

*The President.* Yes, sure. Sure.

*Q.* And have you——

*The President.* They're taking precautions, and we are watching it very closely. And if something bad happens, it's going to be very painful for the other side.

*Q.* Have you been in touch with the Iraqi Government about this?

*The President.* They know about it, yes. They know about it.

*Q.* Are they offering additional protection or anything?

*The President.* Well, we'll see. We'll see what happens. But, you know, we're down to a small force now. Over the years since I got—we've been bringing smaller and smaller. And we're down right now to a small number, but we have very powerful airpower there. We have the big base, and—which will—you know, I mean, nobody can get near it. Nobody can even get near that. But we've really, largely, left. You know, we've taken tremendous amounts out, and we've deployed them elsewhere, including bringing some back home.

#### *The President's Use of Social Media/Facebook, Inc./Iran*

*Q.* And do you think tweeting about it will help prevent that from happening——

*The President.* Yes, I think it's—it's not tweeting.

*Q.* ——or perhaps give them a heads-up?

*The President.* It's called "social media." It's social media. It gets out. I have, you know, hundreds of millions of people. Number one on Facebook. Did you know I was number one on Facebook? I mean, I just found out I'm number one on Facebook. I thought that was very nice for whatever it means.

No, it represents something. And when I can explain to people: Just don't do it. You know, it's going to be bad if you do it. It's going to be really bad. And they don't need to do it. They have enough problems. Iran has enough problems without doing that.

But we've been pulling back very substantially over the last year, in Iraq. And so you know, that's the way it is.

#### *Potential U.S. Military Action*

*Q.* You said, before, you don't want to give the enemy—whoever that is in this case—a heads-up. Do you feel like maybe you did?

*The President.* No. I'm just giving them a warning. It's not a heads up. I'm giving them a warning. There's a big difference. I'm saying: If you do anything to hurt our troops they're going to—they're going to pay a price.



No, they did last time, you know, as per the question. They did last time. We didn't make a big deal out of it, but we hit very, very hard five massive, major ammunition sites, and a lot of people went with it. A lot of bad people. A lot of enemy went with it. And we didn't want to make a big deal out of it, but they paid a big price. They'll pay a much bigger price this time if they do anything.

*Impact of the Coronavirus Among U.S. Navy Personnel*

*Q.* Mr. President, now that we have Admiral Gilday here, perhaps we could ask a question about what the plans are for the *Roosevelt*, sir?

*The President.* Sure.

*Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael M. Gilday, USN.* In terms of *Roosevelt*, we're making great progress in terms of testing and also moving people off the ship. So, in the past day or so, we've moved over 1,000. That number will increase to more than 2,700 by Friday as we continue to increase the testing as well and fly those samples off. So we're getting after it pretty quickly.

*Q.* And will the ship remain fully operational?

*Adm. Gilday.* It is fully operational now.

*Q.* And it will remain so?

*Adm. Gilday.* It will remain so.

*Q.* Can I ask a follow-up to that? What protocols are you putting in place to help mitigate the spread of coronavirus among service men and women who live and work in close quarters?

*Adm. Gilday.* So, across the fleet, before we have any ships getting underway for training exercises, for deployments, they're spending—those sailors are spending 14 days in quarantine before they get underway. We've increased the amount of testing equipment, as well as physicians onboard our ship at sea. So we've taken additional steps since the beginning of the COVID crisis.

*The President.* And not too many people are going to be getting off at various ports anymore. Right?

I think we——

*Adm. Gilday.* Correct.

*The President.* We probably have decided on that. Okay?

*Q.* You mean civilians?

*The President.* Thank you. No, military people, from the ships.

*Secretary Esper.* I want to add one—I'd like to add one thing to that. There seems to be this narrative out there that we should just shut down the entire United States military and address the problem that way. That's not feasible. We have a mission. Our mission is to protect the United States of America and our people. And so we live and work in cramped quarters, whether it's an aircraft carrier, a submarine, a tank, a bomber. It's the nature of our business.

But the chain of command has very clear guidance. And I'm confident between the commanding officers and the senior noncommissioned officers, that they're taking every reasonable precaution to make sure we practice, as best we can, social distancing, sanitizing environments, et cetera, consistent with that mission. And that's what I trust Admiral Gilday, Acting Secretary Modly, and all the other Service Chiefs and Service leaders to do. And I'm

confident we'll do that. Because keep in mind, we have a job to do and we will continue to do it: defend the United States of America.

*Federal Coronavirus Response/Availability of Medical Supplies and Equipment/Federal-State Coordination*

*Q.* Mr. President, you mentioned the stockpile earlier. The Washington Post reported today that the U.S. stockpile is nearly depleted of PPE. Is that the case?

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* And if so——

*The President.* It is——

*Q.* ——how are you planning to mitigate that?

*The President.* ——because we're sending it directly to hospitals. We don't want it to come to the stockpile, because then we have to take it after it arrives and bring it to various States and hospitals.

One of the things—and again, we asked the States to do this as much as possible—many of the States have people that—whether it's that or clothing; they make clothing, lots of clothing in many of the different States. We said: "See if you can get it directly from those manufacturers. Make a deal." We'll use the purchase act, if we have to, on them. If they won't—by the way, so many people are—the spirit is incredible, what they're doing.

But we've asked States where they have large manufacturers of different types of equipment to use those local factories, those local plants, and have it made directly. Ship it right into the hospitals.

We're shipping things right in. We have, as you know, almost 10,000 ventilators, which we need for flexibility. It's a lot. It sounds like a lot, but it's not. Because, as you see on the board from yesterday, as this scourge, as this plague, as this virus moves—it moves very fast—and we don't know yet whether we're going to need it in Louisiana, in New York, and you know, wherever it may be. So we're ready for it. We're totally ready for it.

We're going to be shipping out—we've already agreed to ship out over a thousand today to different sites, different locations. But we have to have the flexibility of moving the ventilators to where the virus is going. And we'll be able to see that—you know, we'll be able to see that from charts a couple of days in advance.

So right now we have a nice pile of ventilators. We have a lot more coming in. We have a lot of—I think we have 11 companies that are making ventilators right now. Very good companies. And they're making them—you know about Ford, you know about General Motors, but we have a lot of companies making the ventilators right now.

So now the question is—you know, when you make one, it doesn't get made in 15 minutes. It's not—a mask can go quickly; a ventilator takes time to build. It's a very, very—as we discussed, it's complex, it's big, it's expensive—you know, et cetera. But we'll be able to move. We have great flexibility.

John.

*Q.* I was just going to say, sir, do you want to move on to solely coronavirus or stick with the military?

*The President.* Yes, I think if—does anybody have any other questions for this great group of brilliant people?

Yes, please.

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. A question for Secretary Esper. Is the military personnel that's been fanned out across the country to help combat the virus, is there any chance that they're planning to see, at some point, having military personnel treat or see COVID-19 patients?

*Secretary Esper.* Well, excuse me. As you know, we have the hospital ships currently deployed, one in L.A. and one in New York City. So they are—they will be—they could be treating patients as they come in. We're taking precautionary measures to screen them beforehand to make sure that they're not exposed, if you will.

*[Secretary Esper continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

That said, we remain completely available to assist as need be, as directed by FEMA, as the Vice President and the President asks us. That's what we've committed to do to the American people to help safeguard them and protect them through this—through this virus.

### *Potential Further Use of Naval Hospital Ships*

*Q.* So as part of that, they—will they be seeing coronavirus patients or will they strictly be seeing other patients and helping organize?

*Secretary Esper.* They could have called upon—I think the best use for them is—based on their training and how they're structured and organized—is for trauma. We can take the load off of hospitals with regard to their trauma patients, thereby freeing up rooms and other doctors, particularly doctors who are, you know, respiratory nurses or doctors who deal with infectious disease to treat those type of patients.

So I think it's the best use of our resources. But again, if push comes to shove, we're prepared to do what we have to assist the American people, at the same time preserving the medical capability we need to support our operations and deployed forces abroad.

*The President.* And we're looking at doing two additional brandnew hospital ships, because these ships have really—I mean, they really struck a blow—a very positive blow—for what they're doing going into Los Angeles, going into New York.

So we're looking very seriously at building two additional ships of about the same size.

*Q.* Building two new ones or deploying two new ones?

*The President.* It will either be—well, building. But we're looking at building either two new ones or doing the renovation of another large ship. But this has really worked out well. So probably two brandnew ones.

*Q.* Just to follow up——

*Q.* So, Mr. President—Mr. President——

*The President.* Is this concerning the gentlemen, or do you want them——

*Q.* Yes. No. No.

*The President.* You don't want them to get back to work and capture all those bad people?

*Q.* A follow-up, Mr. President or Mr. Secretary——

*The President.* Go ahead. Sure. Go ahead.

### *Department of Veterans Affairs Hospitals*

*Q.* I know that Secretary Wilkie has said he's on standby, waiting to hear if VA hospitals need to be opened—the doors need to be opened to civilians.

*The President.* True.

*Q.* Are you talking about that?

*The President.* Yes, we are.

*Q.* Could we see that happen? How soon would that happen?

*The President.* In fact, certain hospitals—yes, certain hospitals—it can move very quickly. He's a very capable man. We're ready to move very quickly. As an example, in Louisiana, they have a very big hospital, so we're looking to move very quickly if we need them. You know, hopefully, we won't need them.

*Q.* When will you make that decision? Do you think we'll need that soon?

*The President.* We're going to find out pretty soon. We're only going to know when—at the time it happens. We prepare for the worst. We are preparing for the worst. Unfortunately, that's the way we have to look at it.

### *Intended Use of Naval Hospital Ships*

*Q.* Just to follow up on the purpose of these naval ships, you mentioned something about, you know, treating trauma patients. And I'm just curious: What about things like, you know, giving birth? Would mothers be expected, in New York, for example——

*The President.* Well, as I understand, they're not doing that on the ship. That's the one thing they're not doing, outside of the COVID-19. They're not doing that. The birth of a baby, not being done on the ships.

*Q.* Okay. Can I have a follow-up question with Attorney General Barr, please? This has to do with the visa restrictions on immigrant doctors. Is the administration considering easing the restrictions or waiving restrictions for doctors with J-1 or H-1B visas so they can help other doctors during this crisis?

*Attorney General Barr.* Actually, the immigration laws are no longer under the administration of the Department of Justice, and I haven't been participating in any of those discussions.

*Q.* Well, what about you, Mr. President?

*The President.* Good. Any other questions? Please, go ahead.

*Q.* Can you respond to that question, Mr. President?

*The President.* One more. One more for this group back here, please.

### *Iran*

*Q.* To Secretary Esper: The WHO—this is on the topic of coronavirus in Iran. The WHO confirms that Iran is vastly underreporting its coronavirus cases, not just cases, but fatalities. According to on-the-ground estimates, that might be as high as 15½ thousand deaths. Thirty-two commanders in the military in Iran are now confirmed either in dire condition or dead. You have 8 percent of the Parliament now down with coronavirus. So is Iran's soundings of aggressions today that President Trump just tweeted about—do you think, strategically, is that a bluff on their part, or is this a sign of very clear desperation? Where are you, strategically, on that?

*Secretary Esper.* Well, first and foremost, we empathize for the Iranian people. I mean, they clearly have been hit hard. As you know, I think the President has spoken about it, certainly Secretary Pompeo. We've offered assistance, we've offered medical supplies, et cetera. They have refused that.

*[Secretary Esper continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

So I think at the end of the day, again, I feel deep concern for the Iranian people. What—the important thing is that the Iranian Government should focus on them and stop this malign behavior that they've been conducting now for over 40 years. I think the entire region, and certainly the Iranian people, would be better off for it.

*The President.* And I happen to think they want to make a deal; they just don't know, really, how to start. And they've been given some bad advice by former Secretary Kerry, some very bad advice.

*Q.* Is it a bluff on their part, do you think?

*The President.* And I really think they want to make a deal—which is the Logan Act, but we'd have to look at the Logan Act. All you have to do is take a look. I think they've been given very bad advice by Secretary Kerry. I think that—I think they're dying to make a deal.

Look, their country is in trouble. Their economics are shot. They're in—they've got a lot of bad things going. I think they'd like to make a deal. They can get it settled very quickly.

No nuclear weapons. No nuclear weapons.

*Q.* Do you feel like you're—would you be in a position to——

*The President.* They can't have nuclear weapons. It's very simple.

Okay, let's let these folks get back to work. Is that okay? Thank you all very much.

So, as we deploy our servicemembers to combat both threats abroad, invisible enemy at home, earlier today I spoke to our Nation's incredible warriors and military families. Spent a long time on the phone with thousands and thousands of families that were hooked in.

In order to stop the spread of the virus, some of these families have delayed planned moves to their next duty station. And in other cases, military families are also waiting longer to welcome home their heroes from deployment. There's a tremendous burden to bear. And the families have been involved with us for so long, and they are incredible. Without the families, they couldn't be the great servicemembers that they turned out to be, and they understand that.

And I must say, protecting our military families is our top priority. So they understand what they're—what's happening with respect to the virus—and they understand it well. They've been fantastic. As Commander in Chief, I'm deeply grateful for our servicemembers, their spouses, and their children, whose love, devotion, and sacrifice keeps America strong.

To make, procure, and deliver crucial medical supplies to our doctors, nurses, and health care workers, my administration is leveraging the might of American manufacturing, supply chains, and innovators across the industry and across every industry. And I just told you about Walmart, and I could tell you about many more. Hanes is making protective gear and masks, and we're making tremendous amounts of product. There's never been anything like it.

At the same time, I tell the Governors: "Get it yourself, if you can, from your local companies and your local warehouses and factories. If you can do that, you should do that."

Because of the actions that we've taken under the Defense Production Act, manufacturers and suppliers are sharing with FEMA and HHS their planned orders and allocations to States and to hospitals all over the region. This enables FEMA and HHS to work closely with States, local governments, and private sector to allocate critical resources to highly impacted areas.

Working together, we're entirely focused on getting materials to the right place at the right time. So we want it to go directly to a hospital or directly to a certain State location, and ideally,

not even hit the States' warehouses. If we can avoid the warehouses, it's even better because they go directly into a hospital.

And one example of that is Ohio, the great State of Ohio. Senator Rob Portman called today, and he asked for some help and got us—did a tremendous job, along with Mike DeWine, the great Governor of Ohio, to facilitate a donation of 2.2 million gowns—2.2 million gowns. Think of what that is: 2.2 million to the Strategic National Stockpile from Ohio-based Cardinal Health. Cardinal Health, we appreciate it. And they're making much more than that and different types of things.

We're profoundly grateful for their contribution to protect the lives and safety of our healthcare professionals. Cardinal has been working with us very well.

FEMA and HHS formed a historic partnership with the private sector called Project Airbridge to bring supplies from other countries to the United States, including gloves, gowns, goggles, and masks. These supplies will soon be distributed around the country. We have large cargo planes coming in from various parts of the world.

Every day, new plane loads are landing in cities such as New York, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles. Additional flights have been scheduled, and we're adding more and more. And they're actually coming in ahead of schedule. A lot of these flights are coming in with a lot of material ahead of schedule. The amount of usage, the amount of need, is something that nobody has ever seen before. We are getting so much, but no matter how much we get, they seem to use it up very quickly.

More than 17,000 National Guard personnel have now been activated all across our country. On Tuesday, the Vice President sent a letter to the Governors, calling on them to have plans in place to use the National Guard to move medical supplies from warehouses to hospitals.

So, a lot of times, we'll deliver supplies to a warehouse in a State—someplace in New York or in New Jersey or in Connecticut or wherever it may be—and they're having difficulty getting it moved. So what we're doing, if we don't bring it directly to the hospital, is we've authorized—it was a special authorization—the National Guard to go into that facility and to move it for the State. So the National Guard is moving a lot of this equipment and medical supplies into a hospital or into an area where it's needed by the State.

As I said yesterday, difficult days are ahead for our Nation. We are going to have a couple of weeks, starting pretty much now, but especially a few days from now, that are going to be horrific. But even in the most challenging of times, Americans do not despair. We do not give in to fear. We pull together, we persevere, and we overcome, and we win.

This week, every American heart is joined with the people of New York as they continue to bear the brunt of the pandemic. To every New Yorker: Please know that we are by your side. I love New York. And every day, we will be with you.

And it could very well be that others take over from New York. There are some areas, some hotspots in other States that are really exploding. Some, like Louisiana, were very late. And then, all of a sudden, it was like an explosion.

In confronting this deadly plague, America is armed with capabilities never dreamed of in past centuries. You look at 1917, the pandemic, it was something. Ravaged parts of this country, but ravaged Europe. Ravaged. They say 75 to 100 million—some people say 50 to 75 million—people died. Think of that. And that was a long time ago, over 100 years ago. Very, very many books written about the 1917, 1918 pandemic.

Our doctors are poring over the virus genetic code, designing potential therapies and vaccines. Our planes are airlifting supplies from every corner of the Earth. We're watching other

countries, and they're watching us to see whether or not—and who's going to be the first to come up with a cure or a remedy of some kind or even a help, if it can help—and of course, a vaccine. We're looking very strongly for a vaccine. Johnson & Johnson is doing well, and other companies are doing very well.

But our most powerful asset, our greatest weapon in this effort is the spirit of our people. And we want to keep away, keep a distance. Keep away. If you don't get it—that solves a lot of problems. If you don't get it—and you can't get it if you keep the distance.

American spirit is unyielding, unwavering, and unbreakable. It's incredible. I've never seen anything like it, the way the people have pulled together, the unity of this country.

So, together, we're going to win this war, and the sooner we do, the sooner we can begin to rebuild. And we're ready to rebound and return to normal lives. We went from the best economy in the history of the world, the best economy that this country has ever seen—the best employment numbers we've ever had; 160 million people working, almost; 160 million—to a point where the professionals came to me, and they say, "Sir, you're going to have to shut the country down." I said, "What does that mean?" They said, "Sir, you're going to have to shut it down."

And we're going to build it up, and I think we're going to build it up fast. I think we're going to have a tremendous rebound. There's a great energy and a great pent-up demand.

And as you know, phase three was terrific, and phase four—what passed in Congress—and phase four, if that happens, will be great. I already proposed a—we're paying almost zero interest on bonds, and I proposed a \$2 trillion infrastructure plan, which would not only fix our roads and highways and bridges and tunnels and other things, but will also do something very good. It's called jobs.

I'm also asking that restaurants and entertainment facilities go back to the old deductibility from corporations where corporations can buy, because otherwise, a lot of these restaurants are going to have a hard time reopening. It takes a long time. And they're going to have a hard time reopening. So we're asking for going back to deductibility, where corporations can buy and corporations can go out to lunch, and they pay, and they get a deduction on what they eat, they get a deduction on the bill, and same with the entertainment. It's going to bring a lot of people back. I think it will open up the restaurant business.

People forget that, years ago, they had that. And when they got rid of it, when they ended it for whatever reason—but they ended it—many, many restaurants went out of business, many entertainment-type facilities went out of business. And now is a great time to bring it back. It was a terrible time for that business after they ended it. But this is a great time to bring it back. It will keep our restaurants going. In fact, I think the restaurant business will be actually bigger and better than it is right now. So we're also talking about that.

And now what we'll do is, we'll take some questions. And I see Mike is back with some of the folks.

*Vice President Michael R. Pence.* Right here.

*The President.* That's great. Dr. Fauci. And we will—oh, how are you? Thank you, Deborah.

So we'll take some questions, and we make progress day by day.

Please.

*Coronavirus Medical Characteristics/The President's Reaction to Developments in the Coronavirus Pandemic*

*Q.* Mr. President, yesterday you were talking about a friend you had who is in a coma.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* I'm sorry to hear your friend is going through that. But you said, "This is no flu." There's still some people who kind of think of this as the flu, and over the past month, you've compared it to the flu sometimes, saying, "Treat it like the flu" or, you know, "Treat it how we handle the flu."

So what changed your thinking on that or your language on that?

*The President.* I think the severity. I think also in looking at the way the contagion—it is so contagious. Nobody has ever seen anything like this, where large groups of people, all of a sudden, just by being in the presence of somebody, have it. The flu has never been like that. And there is—flu is contagious, but nothing like we've ever seen here.

Also, the violence of it. If it hits the right person—and you know what those stats are—if it hits the right person, that person is in deep trouble. And my friend was the right person.

*Q.* When you heard about that with your friend, was that a turning point in your thinking, to some extent?

*The President.* Yes, well, not a turning point. No. Before that, I knew how—because I'm seeing numbers and I'm seeing statistics that are, you know, not exactly very good.

So—but it hit him very hard. He's strong—a very strong kind of a guy. But he's older. He's heavier. And he's sort of central casting for what we're talking about, and it hit him very hard. I've never seen anything like it.

Yes, John.

#### *Potential Domestic Travel Restrictions/Airline Industry*

*Q.* Mr. President—and maybe this is a question as well for Dr. Birx or Dr. Fauci: Senator Lindsey Graham tweeted last night—and we checked today—that there are still flights that are running between hotspots like New York and Detroit, New Orleans as well. A number of flights were completed today.

Senator Graham's point is, if you're going to declare mitigation, should it not be full mitigation—

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* —and you stop people from traveling to these hotspots?

*The President.* Well, we're thinking about doing that. At the same time, we just—you know, to start these airlines and to start this whole thing over again is very tough, John. It's very tough. And you have them going, in some cases, from hotspot to hotspot. If you notice, they're usually hotspot to hotspot. Very few flights. New York to Miami.

And—but we're thinking—we're certainly looking at it. But once you do that, you really are clamping down on an industry that is desperately needed.

*Q.* But how do you make that calculation as to whether or not you keep the industry afloat—

*The President.* Well, we're going to—

*Q.* —or you risk spreading contagion?

*The President.* Yes. That is a calculation that we're looking at right now. We're looking at it very strongly.



Please.

### *Variation in State Coronavirus Responses/Federal Coronavirus Response*

*Q.* So let me follow up to that, Mr. President. Not every Governor has issued a stay-at-home order. All of you have made it very clear how important it is to stay home; that we are in a dire situation here. And that's how you stop the spread, is staying home.

*The President.* Yes. Sure.

*Q.* Why not take the power out of the hands of the Governors, and you just issue a stay-at-home order for every State in this country?

*The President.* Yes. Because States are different. States are different. And I understand that the Governor of Florida—great Governor, Ron DeSantis—issued one today. And that's good. That's great. But there are some States that are different. There are some States that don't have much of a problem.

*Q.* What makes them different?

*The President.* There are some—well, they don't have the problem. They don't have thousands of people that are positive, or thousands of people that even think they might have it—or hundreds of people, in some cases.

So you have to look——

*Q.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* You have to look at States. You have to give a little bit of flexibility. I mean, if a State in the Midwest, or if Alaska, as an example, doesn't have a problem, it's awfully tough to say, "Close it down." So we have to have a little bit of flexibility.

Look, we're helping Governors. We're really here to help Governors. They're the frontline of attack, and that includes in purchasing, by the way. We're here, and we're backing them up. And there's never been a backup like we've given them. We've given them billions of dollars' worth of things: medical supplies and ventilators, thousands and thousands of ventilators. We have thousands under construction right now. We have thousands ready to go in case they need it. There's never been anything like this.

I mean, we've—they've done really—the people have done incredibly. We're building hospitals all over the country. We're building hospitals right now at a rate that has never even been contemplated before. They're mobile hospitals, but they're really not mobile. I mean, they're incredible structures. But we're building many hospitals: Louisiana, New Jersey, New York. We just finished a massive hospital complex. And we also have medical centers built in New York. I mean, we're building hospitals at the rate that this country has never done before. And hopefully, it's all going to work out.

*Q.* A follow-up on DeSantis, sir?

*The President.* Please, go ahead.

### *Potential Domestic Travel Restrictions*

*Q.* Yes, Mr. President. I just want to make sure we're clear. On the planes, are you looking at just curtailing routes between certain hotspots, or is it broadly?

*The President.* Well, we're looking at the whole thing, because we're getting into a position now where we want to do that. We have to do that. And so we're looking at the whole thing.

Yes.

*Q.* You wouldn't——

*The President.* And we may have some recommendations.

*Global Oil Markets/Gasoline Prices/Russia/Saudi Arabia/Domestic Oil Production*

*Q.* And my second question on economics. Just with oil, oil prices are very low.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* The Saudis have increased production. I know that you've spoken about liking low oil prices, but then there's also the industry aspect.

*The President.* It's like from 1950, these oil prices. And that's when they had big dollars—big, beautiful dollars.

*Q.* So do you advocate cuts? Do you advocate cuts to production? Do you——

*The President.* Well, look, we have a great oil industry, and the oil industry is being ravaged. And, as you know, Russia—and I spoke to President Putin; we had a great call. Russia, Saudi Arabia—I spoke with the Crown Prince; we had a great call. But I think that they will work it out over the next few days. If you ask me, I think it's just—it's too simple not to be able to. They both know what they have to do. So I think I have confidence in both that they'll be able to work it out.

But it's—it has ravaged an industry worldwide, not here. I mean, worldwide, the oil industry has been ravaged. So there was a lot of oil production to start off with. And then, on top of it, it got hit with the virus, and business went down 35, 40 percent. So that business is a tough one. And you know, they have ships all over the sea. I told you yesterday—all over the sea. Massive tankers that they're using for storage. They go out, and they just sit there. There's no place to go. They have massive amounts.

Now, gasoline is going to be 99 cents a gallon and less. You know that. That's already starting. It's popping up. Ninety-nine cents. So that's like giving a massive tax cut to people of our country. When we try and get the airlines going, if fuel is costing much less, it helps with getting the airlines, which is always a tough business. Always has been a tough business.

But with that being said, look, I want to get that industry back where it was. We were doing records in that industry also. We want to get it back to where it was.

So I think that Saudi Arabia, Russia, they're negotiating. They're talking. And I think they'll come up with something. I'm going to meet with the oil companies on Friday. I'm going to meet with independent oil producers also on Friday or Saturday, maybe Sunday. But we're having a lot of meetings on it. I think I know what to do to solve it. But if they're unable to solve it, then I think I know what to do to solve it.

*Q.* Can you give us a glimpse of what direction——

*The President.* We won't mention it now, but it's tough. I think I know what to do to solve it. We don't want to lose our great oil companies. You know, we're the number-one producer of oil in the world. And a month ago, when you said that, it was great. Today, when you say it, it's not so meaningful.

But I do believe there's a way that that can be solved or pretty well solved. And I'd rather not do that. I think that Russia and Saudi Arabia, at some point, are going to make a deal in the not-too-distant future, because it's very bad for Russia. It's very bad for Saudi Arabia. It's very bad. I mean, it's bad for both, so I think they're going to make a deal.

You know, the free market is a wonderful thing. It's amazing how it can work. But I think they're going to make a deal.

Yes. Yes, please. In the back.

### *Illegal Immigration/Economic Impact of the Coronavirus*

*Q.* Mr. President, a couple of questions. One for you, one for Mr. Wolf, if possible. Over 5 million immigrants in this country do pay taxes through their ID numbers, yet they will not receive any money in their stimulus package. And no undocumented immigrant will receive any aid from the Government during this crisis. How do you suppose they survive during the COVID-19?

*The President.* Well, you know, you're saying "undocumented," meaning they came in illegally. And a lot of people would say we have a lot of citizens right now that won't be working. So what are you going to do? It's a tough thing. It's a very terrible—it's a very sad question, I must be honest with you. But they came in illegally. And we have a lot of people that are citizens of our country that won't be able to have jobs.

Now, I do think once we get rid of the virus, I think we're going to have a boom economy. I think it's going to go up rather quickly. Maybe very quickly. And maybe slowly. But it's going to go up, and it will all come back. And I think it's actually going to come back stronger than what it was because of the stimulus.

But it's a really sad situation, and we are working on it. I will tell you, I'm not going to give you a hard and fast answer, because I just want to tell you, it's something I think about, and it's something we're working on.

Please.

*Q.* Can I ask a question of Mr. Wolf?

*The President.* Go ahead.

*Q.* Thanks, Mr. President. A question for Dr. Fauci. Looking beyond, when we're on the other side of this curve, are we looking at living with some sort of social distancing guidelines essentially until there's treatment or a vaccine? For example, people looking forward to the summer talk about, you know, going to baseball games, going to concerts. We have political conventions over the summer. Are things like that possible or safe without a vaccine or a treatment in place?

*National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony S. Fauci.* Yes, I think if we get to the part of the curve that Dr. Birx showed yesterday when it goes down to essentially no new cases, no deaths at a period of time, I think it makes sense that you're going to have to relax social distancing.

*[Director Fauci continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

The ultimate—the ultimate—solution to a virus that might keep coming back would be a vaccine. In fact, I was on the weekly conference call with the WHO-sponsored group of all the health leaders in the world who are dealing with this. And we all came to the agreement that we may have cycling with another season. We'll be much better prepared. We likely will have interventions. But the ultimate game changer in this will be a vaccine, the same way a vaccine for other diseases that were scourges in the past, that now we don't even worry about.

*Q.* I have another one for Dr. Fauci.

### *Coronavirus Vaccine Development*

*The President.* And, Tony, how are they doing with the vaccines, Tony?

*Director Fauci.* I mean, the vaccine is, as I said, it's on target. We're still in phase one. There were three doses that we had to test. We've been through the first two doses. We're on the highest dose now.

When we get that data—it will take a few months to get the data to feel confident to go to the phase two. And then, a few months from now, we'll be in phase two. And I think we're right on target for the year to a year and a half.

*Director Fauci's Personal Security/Director Fauci's Basketball Prowess*

*Q.* And do you mind me asking: You and Dr. Birx, have either of you received threats of any kind? Or have you been given a security detail, given that you've been out here every day on camera, speaking?

*Director Fauci.* Well, I mean, I—anything that has to do with security detail, I'd have to have you refer that question to the Inspector General of HHS rather than my answer that.

*Q.* Can I follow up on testing, Dr. Fauci?

*The President.* He doesn't need security. Everybody loves him. Besides, they'd be in big trouble if they ever attacked.

You know, he was a great basketball player. *[Laughter]* Did anybody know that? He was a little on the short side for the NBA, but he was talented. And he won a game. I read the story. He won a game that was unwinnable against a great team. And his whole team said, "We can't beat this team." And he went in, and they won the game. Right? That was a couple of years ago, but—  
—

*Director Fauci.* Yes, a few years ago.

*The President.* The head never changes. *[Laughter]* The attitude never changes.

*Q.* Could I ask Dr. Fauci—

*The President.* Yes, please.

*Q.* —because I know he loves being up behind the podium so much.

*The President.* He does. *[Laughter]*

*Q.* Like pulling teeth; like going to the dentist.

I don't want to hit you with everything that's coming along, but a lot of people who are watching television today heard from a researcher named Dr. Jacob Glanville who's come up with a potential antibody therapy that he has given to USAMRIID. Just wanting to know if you know anything about this; what you might be able to tell people at home about it who have seen it.

*Director Fauci.* You know, John, I don't know specifically this individual, what they're doing, but I can tell you there's a lot of activity that is centered around a passive transfer of antibodies in the form of convalescent plasma, one.

*[Director Fauci continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

This is an old concept. In fact, immunology was born decades and decades and decades ago with the concept of giving passive transfer of serum to an individual to protect them from an infection. So it's—I wouldn't be surprised if he and a number of other people are pursuing this. It's the right thing to do.

*Q.* Can I follow up on antibody testing please, Dr. Fauci? At what point can we, as a country, expect there to be a widespread antibody testing so we know exactly what we're dealing with

here, as well as other questions such as, you know, when can people, who are deemed to be healthy, donate blood, for example?

*Director Fauci.* Okay. So when you talk about antibody testing, there are a couple of things that you want to do. You want to find out if someone has been infected and whether or not they're going to ultimately wind up being protected.

*[Director Fauci continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

I foresee that we'll have that same sort of information, which will be important information. But right now that's not our immediate problem.

*Q.* I know it's not your priority, but can you give a sense of whether it will happen this year——

*The President.* Deborah, yes. Go ahead.

*White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator Deborah L. Birx.* I'll just—let me just follow up with that, because I think, as I discussed before, we had great—I just want to thank all the epidemiologists and the scientists out there who worked with us over the last 4 weeks on models. They really—many came forward and really supported us.

*[Ambassador Birx continued her remarks, concluding as follows.]*

So I'm putting that challenge out to them, to really work on that and do that. That's what we did in the early days. We had ELISAs up and running within days of having the antigen. And so this is what's really possible. So we're not waiting. We're asking for help now.

*Q.* So, potentially, this could happen soon, even within this month, if people take up that challenge?

*Ambassador Birx.* It could happen soon, within this month, if the universities help us. Absolutely.

*Q.* Dr. Birx——

*Florida*

*Q.* Mr. President, on Florida——

*The President.* Okay.

*Q.* Governor DeSantis says that he spoke with you before issuing his stay-at-home order.

*The President.* He did. He spoke to me this morning.

*Q.* He has some loopholes in that for——

*The President.* That, I don't know. He spoke to me this morning.

*Q.* ——for religious events, for example.

*The President.* He knows what to do. Very good judgment.

*Q.* Large religious groups can meet together. Now, that doesn't really agree——

*The President.* Who can? Who can?

*Q.* Religious groups. Like churches can meet.

*The President.* I didn't speak to him about it, but he did speak to me this morning. We talked about it. Please.

*Q.* But your model has full mitigation, sir. Does that go against your model? Because that's not full mitigation.

*The President.* I don't know. I'd have to look at what he did.

### *Hardship Compensation for Health Care Workers*

*Q.* Back to the health care workers on the frontlines, following up with Dr. Birx, as well. Hazard pay: You have said you have wanted that for the health care workers on the frontlines. I know Secretary Mnuchin has mentioned something about that, possibly in the fourth level of the stimulus package.

*The President.* I like it. I like it.

*Q.* But can you make it happen now? Do we have to wait for a fourth stimulus?

*The President.* Well, I think it's something we're discussing in terms of bonus or bonus pay. It doesn't have to be called "hazard pay." It can be called——

*Q.* Could it happen now?

*The President.* Hey, look, I watch those people go into hospitals that—I know; I talked about one of them, right? But I watched them walk into those hospitals, and they walk in—men, women, young, middle aged, not so many older ones. And I watch—I watched them. They're almost like—and I think I can take the word "almost" out—they're like warriors. They're going in.

People are cheering. Where there's a building across the street, the people are screaming, they're clapping, they're like heroes.

*Q.* There's murals going up. The Empire State Building lit up at the top.

*The President.* No, no, I will tell you, I think it's incredible.

*Q.* What can you tell them?

*The President.* They're like warriors. They're like soldiers. And we're going to be doing something for them. So whether it's bonus—because, you know, we're, hopefully, going to be over this relatively quickly. It's going to be vicious for a period of time, but hopefully, we're going to be over this.

*Q.* And soon?

*The President.* You have a lot of questions today. Look at you. Do you know this young lady behind you?

*Q.* I've never met her before in my life, sir. [*Laughter*]

*Q.* We're practicing social distancing.

*The President.* That's good. That's a good idea.

*Q.* It makes our marriage strong. [*Laughter*]

*The President.* That's good for a marriage. Right.

### *Health Insurance Reforms*

*Q.* There are a lot of people who are worried about getting sick, and do they end up in a hospital. People who are uninsured, and will they be crushed by medical bills. You were considering, last month—it was last month already, in March—reopening the healthcare.gov exchanges. There has been a determination not to do that. Could you tell us what the rationale was behind that decision——

*The President.* I'll tell you. Mike?

*Q.* —and what—what do you have as an alternative?

*The President.* Yes. Okay. They took that up under the Task Force, and maybe, Mike, you want to say a few word about this—words about that?

*Vice President Pence.* Well, thank you, Mr. President. And what I can tell you is that the President has made a priority, from the outset of our Task Force work, to make sure every American knows that they can have a coronavirus, and they don't have to worry about the cost.

We were very inspired as well, because of the President's engagement with the leading health insurance companies in the country that now—so far, two of the top health insurance companies in America have announced that they're not only willing to waive copays on testing, and now testing is fully covered because of the bill the President signed for every American.

*Q.* But about people who don't have insurance?

*Vice President Pence.* But also, that these two insurance companies have waived copays on all coronavirus treatment. And I can assure you that as Congress and the President and the administration begin to discuss the next piece of legislation, we're going to make sure that Americans have those costs compensated and covered.

[*Vice President Pence continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But the American people can be confident that as we move into this, we're going to make sure that our health care workers are properly compensated for their extraordinary and courageous work. And we'll make sure that the financial burden on those who end up contracting the coronavirus and dealing with its most serious symptoms also can deal with those issues and deal with those costs.

*Q.* Understood, Mr. Vice President. But there will be people who don't have insurance who get sick before any of these mitigation efforts are put into place. And without opening the health care exchanges, where can they find insurance? The people who aren't insured by these companies that are covering the cost of the copay, where can people go now to get health insurance if they get sick—before they sick?

*Vice President Pence.* Well, all across America, we have Medicaid for underprivileged Americans. And at the President's direction, the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services has given unprecedented waivers for States to expand coverage for coronavirus testing and treatment. We've also extended waivers for Medicare administration to make sure that people have access to that coverage.

But we're going to continue to bring opportunities to the President. The traditional systems of Medicaid, in particular, for the uninsured in America——

*Q.* Could you expand that to cover middle class people?

*Vice President Pence.* Well, the—I think what we're seeing health insurance companies do today, John, is really inspiring. I mean, one of the things——

*Q.* But, again, Mr. Vice President——

*Vice President Pence.* One of the things that's characterized——

*Q.* I'm sorry to belabor a point, but that's for people who——

*Vice President Pence.* ——the President's approach here——

*Q.* That's for people who already have insurance.

*Vice President Pence.* Well, one of the things that has animated and characterized the President's approach is the way he's engaged American businesses to step up and do their part.

[*Vice President Pence continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

But we'll get through this using the full weight of the Federal Government and the full strength of the American economy.

*The President.* John, I think this: I think it's a very fair question though, and it's something we're really going to look at, because it doesn't seem fair. If you have it, you have a big advantage. And at certain income level you do.

I think it's one of the greatest answers I've ever heard, because Mike was able to speak for 5 minutes and not even touch your question.

*Q.* No.

*The President.* So I said—I said, that's what you call a great professional.

But let me just tell you, you really are—it's really a fair question and it's something we're looking at.

*Q.* Well, I think—I mean, just in terms of a fair question or not, I always endeavor to ask fair questions—but this is a huge worry——

*The President.* Yes, I know.

*Q.* ——for people in this country who are in that "doughnut hole"——

*The President.* We'll look.

*Q.* ——where they don't have—they don't have commercial insurance, they don't qualify for Medicaid.

*The President.* Right.

*Q.* What do they do?

*The President.* They're a certain group. And it's a pretty big group. We're looking at it.

*Q.* I mean, we spent the entire 2000 election talking about the "doughnut hole," and it's still there.

*The President.* Yes. We are—I haven't been up there yet though, you know. The other people have been talking about it.

*Q.* No, I mean, this was 2000.

*The President.* And they haven't spoken——

*Q.* This was 20 years ago, we were talking about it.

*The President.* But they're thinking about it. They're talking about it.

*Q.* Gore v. Bush—it was all about the "doughnut hole."

*The President.* I know, but they're talking about it in 2020 election too. And nobody has gotten to it. Nobody has talked about at all.

*Q.* Can you get to it, Mr. President?

*The President.* I think we will, yes. I think we're going to get to it. I think we're going to get to it. I don't think the other group will get to it. They haven't even spoken about it. And it's a big group of people.



### *Health Insurance Reforms*

*Q.* So are you committing that there is something you're going to do for——

*The President.* No, I'm not committing. But it's something we're going to look at.

*Q.* ——for the uninsured, for——

*The President.* I can't commit. I have to get approval from it. I have thing called "Congress." But it's something we're going to look at. And we have been looking at it.

*Q.* But in the——

*The President.* Go ahead.

### *Economic Stimulus Legislation/Infrastructure/U.S. Military Involvement in the Middle East/Domestic Investment Priorities*

*Q.* You mentioned, in this next congressional bill, the next—the, sort of, phase four, you would like to see something put in there for the uninsured?

*The President.* If there is a phase four, but we're certainly looking at certain things. We want to help restaurants, entertainment. And we want to help—because it's jobs. Not that restaurants—it's jobs; tremendous amounts of jobs. So we're looking at that. We're looking at infrastructure.

I mean, we—think of it: We will have spent \$8 trillion. And you know, it's way back. We're way pulled back. But we will have spent \$8 trillion in the Middle East, and yet our roads are in bad shape; our bridges, our tunnels in bad shape.

And we're going to be the talk of the world again soon. But we want \$2 trillion. We will have spent in the Middle East—and all we got out of it was death and cost. But all we got out of it was death. Millions of people. You have to look at the other side too. Millions and millions of people killed. Our great soldiers—thousands killed; so many wounded, hurt. And yet, when we want to go and fix a road someplace, we want to do what we want to do in our country—no, it's time that we spend money on our country. That's what we're going to do.

*Q.* [Inaudible]

*The President.* It's time that we start spending on our roads and our bridges and our schools, and all of the things that we're supposed to be spending on. And people are finally getting used to it. And you could look at all of what we've done in the Middle East, way back in so many different places—way back in other countries too, by the way.

And I've gone to other countries that are very rich. I said, "I'm sorry, you're going to have to reimburse us for our costs." They don't even want to—know what I'm talking about. It takes them 20 minutes to figure it out, because nobody has ever asked them to do that. And they're doing it. They're doing it. And they have no choice. They have to do it.

So it's time that we start spending on the U.S.A.

Okay, please.

### *Coronavirus Testing Technology and Access*

*Q.* Mr. President, this is a question for the Vice President. On March 9, you said 1 million tests had been delivered and another 4 million would be delivered by the end of the week. That clearly did not happen. What happened with those projections? What went wrong?

*Vice President Pence.* Well, I think the test kits were delivered, according to HHS. But the difference is between receiving a test and the ability to rapidly produce a result of that test. And

frankly, because of the public-private partnership that the President initiated, now more than a month ago, with our massive commercial laboratories across the country, our team was reported today that we're now doing more than 100,000 tests a day. More than 1.2 million tests have been performed.

States have established drive-through sites all across the country. In fact, States have been so successful with the community-based and drive-through testing that we're working to transition over completely all of the Federal work on drive-through testing and have the States completely manage that process. But——

*Q.* But you're saying 4 million tests were delivered by the end of that week?

*Vice President Pence.* HHS was very busy, from early in the year, delivering test kits around the country. But the difference was, as the President said many times, we had an antiquated system where a State laboratory or CDC only had the capacity to process 40 to 60 tests a day.

*[Vice President Pence continued his remarks, concluding as follows.]*

There's some 19 States where we don't have significant outbreak, but we want to be doing the kind of surveillance testing in those States that will allow us, early on, to identify people with the coronavirus, do what the experts call contact tracing, and ensure that, in that State, we don't have an outbreak of the coronavirus. So——

*The President.* And many countries all over the world want to know whether or not they can use, especially, our new test that we—that was just developed by Abbott, which is almost instantaneous, which is going to be great.

And remember this: We inherited—the word is we "inherited" bad tests. We really inherited bad tests. These are horrible tests. And it was broken. It was all broken. And we fixed it. And we're doing millions of tests. Sometimes, we send out a test, and it's not used. In many cases, it wasn't used. But we worked with the States and the testing has been pretty amazing, especially considering the fact that we inherited a very broken system.

Jeff.

### *Potential Domestic Travel Restrictions*

*Q.* Hi, Mr. President. Just to follow up on something you said before: Are you considering a temporary ban on all domestic flights?

*The President.* I am looking at hotspots. I am looking where flights are going into hotspots. Some of those flights I didn't like from the beginning. But closing up every single flight on every single airline, that's a very, very, very rough decision, but we are thinking about hotspots, where you go from spot to spot, both hot. And we'll let you know fairly soon.

*Q.* And what about rail travel?

*The President.* A similar thing. We have trains going back and forth. And people don't think of trains, but we do a lot of transportation business. It's a very big decision to do that. And we're pretty late in the process from the standpoint that this is starting—you're going to start seeing—I think, over the next couple of weeks, you're going to start to see us hit a top and start coming down.

So we'll make those decisions. Those are very, very big decisions, from the standpoint of the future of our country, in a way—in the future of our country.

We have to get our country back, we have to start moving again, we have to start working again. Now, they're doing tests on airlines—very strong tests—for getting on, getting off. They're

doing tests on trains, getting on, getting off. But when you start closing up entire transportation systems and then opening them up, that's a very tough thing to do.

*Q.* One more follow-on——

*Q.* What about——

*The President.* Please, go ahead.

### *Protective Face Masks*

*Q.* There continues to be a lot of public confusion about the use of masks. What is the way——

*The President.* Reuse. I love the sterilization of the mask. So, Ohio company—you can sterilize a—the N95. You can sterilize that mask for up to 20 times. Think of that: up to 20 times. We're throwing them out, and they're very expensive masks. They're throwing them out.

And I kept saying—one of the first questions I asked to Dr. Fauci, I said, "Why aren't they sterilizing or cleaning the mask?" Because I didn't—you know, it wasn't my thing exactly when we first heard about this. Nobody else knew it either.

And now we have a company and, I guess, a number of companies—one in Ohio, a great one—that makes equipment where you can sterilize a mask up to 20 times, which is fantastic.

Okay?

### *Coronavirus Containment Efforts/Protective Face Masks*

*Q.* But what about you or me? What about the public? Should we be wearing masks out? We've heard lots of different recommendations.

*The President.* It's—I don't believe—look, this is a big things. A lot of people don't like it. Some people don't like it because you're taking it away from the medical professional. Some people don't like it for other reasons. I don't see where it hurts. And it doesn't have to be a mask; it can be a scarf. A scarf is highly recommended by the professionals.

I don't see where it hurts. I think if—frankly, if people wanted to do it—we don't want to do anything that's going to take masks. You're talking about a tremendous amount of masks when you do that. We don't want to take them away from our medical professionals, but I certainly don't see it hurting.

But what I do see people doing now is using scarves. And I think, in a certain way, depending on the fabric—I think, in a certain way, a scarf is better. It's actually better.

*Q.* Mr. President——

*The President.* Yes, please. You didn't—you didn't get—go ahead.

### *Impact of Social Distancing on Religious Organizations*

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask you about social distancing and how it applies to religious organizations.

*The President.* Yes.

*Q.* Some churches, as you know, have continued to hold services, even though you have advised people that they need to practice social distancing. There was a pastor of a mega church in Florida over the weekend who held services that were attended by several hundred people.

So my question to you is: Should pastors be holding services in the middle of this pandemic? And, even if they do, should Americans be going to church?

*The President.* Well, my biggest disappointment is that churches can't meet in a time of need. You know, this is really a great time for churches to be together, for people to get together on a Sunday or whenever—any day and meet. And yet, if you do that, if you do it close, you're really giving this invisible enemy a very big advantage.

So it's the biggest—I think the single biggest disappointment is, you can't—one of the reasons I said, "Wouldn't it be great just to—to pick a date?" As you know, I called it "aspirational"—and an aspirational date would be Easter. And I will tell you, it's a—it's very, very disappointing. But again, you get too close, and if somebody is sick, you're going to probably catch it. So you have to be very careful. Please.

*Q.* Should they cancel or——

*Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*

*Q.* So yes, just real quickly. Joe Biden's campaign came out with a statement today——

*The President.* Sleepy Joe.

*Q.* ——saying that Biden would be open——

*The President.* Did he write the statement or did some PR person write it?

*Q.* As far as I know, the campaign was wide awake, sir, and he—they sent out a statement——  
—

*The President.* Good. For a change.

*Q.* ——that Joe Biden would be open to having a phone call with you to talk about the coronavirus pandemic.

*The President.* That's okay. Sure.

*Q.* Would you take his call?

*The President.* Oh, absolutely. I'd like to——

*Q.* You would talk to him about it?

*The President.* I'd like to speak to him. Sure. I'd like to—I'd be—he should be able to——

*Q.* How do you think you could work together?

*The President.* I always found him to be a nice guy. I don't know him very well, frankly, but I think he's probably a nice guy. No, if he'd like to call, I'd absolutely take his call. Okay? You could tell him. All right?

*News Media*

*Q.* But you have talked about the failings of the Obama administration and leaving you with empty shelves and no plans. They have said you got——

*The President.* Well—and no ammunition. And maybe no ammunition.

*Q.* They have said you got rid of the Pandemic Office in the National Security Council.

*The President.* We didn't do that. That turned out to be a false story. Now you're starting to go——

*Q.* No, no, no. I'm just——

*The President.* What? Are you working for CNN?

*Q.* I'm pointing out what they have said and what you have said. That's all.

*The President.* I thought you were with Fox. Fox isn't so easy either, don't kid yourself.

*Q.* Mr. President, I—this is not about—this is not about Fox or CNN.

*The President.* Look, John, let me tell you something. You know that's a false story.

*Q.* This is just about statements that——

*The President.* What you just said is a false story.

*Q.* I'm just saying that they have——

*The President.* This doctor knows it better than anybody.

*Q.* I'm just saying they have accused you of that.

*The President.* No, but you shouldn't be repeating a story that you know is false.

All right, who's next?

*Q.* Mr. President, what about the two cruise ship that's on its way to Port Everglades?

*The President.* Please go ahead, in the back. You didn't get any.

#### *Coronavirus Outbreak in Iran/Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action*

*Q.* You talked about Iran and Iran is struggling with the virus——

*The President.* It's very sad what's happening in Iran.

*Q.* ——and a broken economy. Under which conditions would you consider suspending sanctions—U.S. sanctions?

*The President.* Well, look, we have to talk to them. I think we could work out a deal with Iran very quickly. All they have to do is call. I just think that, you know, they're proud people, and the leadership is proud. They're proud like all of us. We're proud. You people are proud. They're having a hard time picking up the phone, or they're having a hard time setting up the meeting, but they could fix their country pretty easily.

And we don't want hostility, but if they are hostile to us, they're going to regret it like they've never regretted anything before, as per today's statement. But all they have to do is call or have somebody call. You know, there are channels where we can deal very easily.

Again, I think that John Kerry did a tremendous disservice. I think he violated the Logan Act, a hundred percent. That's what I think. And I think it made it tough for them, because they were dealing with them for years. It was a terrible deal. All of that money, \$150 billion, plus cash. Plus cash? Planeloads of cash for a deal that was no good. And it was short-term. Essentially, it was a short-term deal. Who makes a deal for that kind of money?

And \$1.8 billion in cash. I don't even know what that would look like. That would be—this room would have to be filled up five times with hundred-dollar bills, okay? Who makes a deal like this? And then, on top of it, the deal is no good.

All right, how about one or two more?

*Q.* On RNC, Mr. President——

#### *Domestic Violence/Coronavirus Containment Efforts/Secondary Effects of Social Quarantine*

*Q.* Mr. President, Seattle police have reported a surge in calls about domestic violence. A number of groups have raised concerns——

*The President.* About Mexican violence?

*Q.* Domestic violence.

*The President.* Oh.

*Q.* A number of groups have raised concerns that the longer people are stuck at home, the more domestic violence cases there are going to be. Do you share those concerns? And what is being done to make sure they get help?

*The President.* Well, it could be. It's another cost of not getting our country working. I mean, people are—now some people are getting along great. I've also had the opposite—the exact opposite question. People—families are coming together. They're actually coming together. They haven't talked for a long time, and now, all of a sudden, they're talking again; they're loving each other.

So I've heard that too, but I've also have heard domestic violence much—you know, at a higher level. And drug use, because of—in this case, they'd lose their jobs. They had a great job, they had a great life, they have a great family. All of a sudden, a husband is told that he doesn't have a job anymore, and he's got no money. And that brings drugs into it, that brings suicide into it. It—it's a terrible thing. We have to get our country going again. We did the right thing.

*Q.* But on domestic violence——

*The President.* We had no choice. We did the right thing. Other countries tried to use the herd—or the herd mentality. It's just, you know, something that doesn't work. If you look at—I mean, just to say, I heard Sweden gave it a shot, and they went—they saw things that were really frightening, and they went immediately to shutting down the country. We did the right thing, and we did it early. We did it early. And we stopped other people from coming into our country early.

But no, that's a cost. That's a—I've been talking about that. People will say, "What are you talking about?" But you will have—you'll have that, you'll have domestic violence, you have violence, you'll have suicide, you'll have drug addiction. A lot of people are going to be lost.

We want to get this open as soon as we can. I mean, I'll be the happiest person—so will you, everyone in this room—happy when we get the word that this is the time. And we have our common sense, and they'll give me a decision or they'll be making certain statements and I'll—I think I'll know how to interpret those statements very well. I'll be with Mike. I'll be with the Task Force. I'll be with a lot of very talented people, including the two people onstage with us.

But, I look forward—that will be a great day. That will be a great day.

All right. How about one more, please?

*Q.* Mr. President, can I ask a question of Mr. Wolf? Can I ask a question for——

*The President.* Sure.

*Q.* ——Secretary Wolf?

*The President.* Chad, please.

*Q.* What is the current contingency plan in ICE detention centers where cases of COVID-19 are already popping up? Some people have been released. Is there a contingency plan? And would you release the most vulnerable people like children and the elder?

*Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad F. Wolf.* Well, ICE looks at—on a case-by-case basis, even well before COVID—on looking at certain detention facilities and determining on a case-by-case basis if they need—do need to release individuals. And when we do that, we obviously put them on alternatives to detention as well.

[*Acting Secretary Wolf continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So it's really important, and I've said it twice now. It's really a case-by-case basis, determining the health of that particular population or detainee, the facility they're in. Different facilities have different capabilities, whether it's an ICE-owned facility or it's a contractor-owned facility. And so we're certainly doing that. We're doing that today. We've done—been doing that for the past several weeks.

*Q.* Can you say how many have been released?

### *Border Security*

*The President.* While you're up, could you talk about how tight that southern border is right now?

*Acting Secretary Wolf.* Absolutely. We have—we continue to build miles of the wall every day. We're up to over 150, I believe. We're continuing to build new miles of wall. And a lot of folks ask about a replacement wall or new miles. And it's a new capability on our southwest border that we haven't had before.

[*Acting Secretary Wolf continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And we're looking forward, and we're still well on our track—well on our mark to meet 400, 450 miles by the end of the calendar year.

*Q.* And what actions are you taking——

### *Migrant Farm Workers*

*Q.* Mr. Wolf, can I get one more question from you while you're here? There's been concern among farmers about being able to get enough migrant labor to keep the food supply moving as we go into the harvest season. What are you doing to address that?

*Acting Secretary Wolf.* Well, at the direction of the Vice President and the Task Force, we are looking at a number of different options with the H-2A workers that you mentioned, on how do we either extend the validity of their visa or looking at a couple of different options. Nothing to announce here today. But again, at the direction of the President and the Vice President, we're looking at a very—a variety of different options that I think we will have soon, and it will be very beneficial.

*Q.* What about waiving visa restrictions for——

*The President.* But I am glad you asked that question, because we want the farmers—they've had this for years. We want the farmers to be able to get the people that have been working those farms for years, or we're not going to have farms. So they're going to come in, and they're going to be given a certain pass. And we're going to check them very, very closely, especially over the next month.

Because remember, after a month or so—I think once this passes, we're not going to have to be, hopefully, worried too much about the virus.

But we want them to come in. We're not closing the border so that we can't get any of those people to come in. They've been there for years and years, and I've given the commitment to the farmers: They're going to continue to come. Or we're not going to have any farmers. Okay?

Yes. One more question.

*Q.* What about waiving visa restrictions for immigrant doctors?

*The President.* Who are you with, by the way?

*Q.* I am with Voice of America.

*The President.* Boy. Amazing.

*Q.* So what about waiving these restrictions on immigrant doctors?

*The President.* Okay. Who else, please?

### *Cruise Ships Off Florida Coast/Coronavirus Containment Efforts*

*Q.* In less than 24 hours, sir, two ships will arrive at Port Everglades with people who are infected with coronavirus.

*The President.* We're looking at the two ships. Yes, we have——

*Q.* Should they be let in?

*The President.* We have Canada notified. A lot of Canadians, a lot of British on the ship. And they're coming to take the people that are on the ship back to their homeland. Canada is coming. The U.K. is coming. And we have a lot of—and we have Americans. We have some people that are quite sick, and we're taking care of—that I'm speaking with the Governor about that a lot.

And it's a tough situation. It's a tough situation. You know, I—you can understand. You have people that are sick on those ships, and States don't want to take. They have enough problems right now. They don't want to take them, but we have to, from a humane standpoint. We don't have a choice. It's like, I don't want to do that, but we have to. People are dying.

*Q.* So they will be let into the country?

*The President.* We're going to do something. We're going to do something. At a minimum, we're sending medical teams onboard the ships. We're taking the Canadians off and giving them to Canadian authorities. They're going to bring them back home. The same thing with the U.K.

But we have to help the people. They're in big trouble no matter where they're from. Happen to be Americans, largely Americans. But whether they were or not—I mean, they're dying. So we have to do something.

*Q.* So they'll be treated here——

*The President.* And the Governor knows that too.

*Q.* ——before being sent on?

*The President.* Well, we're sending a lot of them home. Yes, we're sending a lot of them home to their countries, but we'll be doing something, and we'll be announcing it. You'll see what we're doing.

But we're also putting medical staff onto the ships so that we can—we have to take care of the people.

*Q.* One more before you go, sir, at the risk of getting chewed out again——

*The President.* No, you won't get chewed out. [*Laughter*] You know that.

### *Tax Requirements for Stimulus Check Recipients*



*Q.* Mr. President, there is a—the IRS is requiring people who don't normally file income tax to file a simple income tax return in order to get their \$1,200 check. Is that the way it's going to be? Or is there something you can do to streamline?

*The President.* I had heard that. Now, I don't know. Do you know that answer, Mike?

*Vice President Pence.* We're looking into it, Mr. President.

*Q.* The IRS issued some guidance.

*The President.* It sounds like it. Yes, I mean, we'll get——

*Q.* It's not in the bill, but it's——

*The President.* We can get back—yes, it's being—it's a process that they're working on. We'll get back to you as soon as we find out.

All right, one more, please.

### *Coronavirus Outbreak in Brazil/Global Coronavirus Pandemic*

*Q.* Mr. President, you spoke with President Bolsonaro of Brazil today——

*The President.* I did. I spoke to him. Of course.

*Q.* ——at least according to his Twitter.

*The President.* He's great. He's a great guy, and he's doing a wonderful job.

*Q.* But he's still meeting with his supporters.

*The President.* From Brazil. Spoke to him this morning.

*Q.* He's hugging them. So what is your assessment——

*The President.* And just a very complimentary call. He's working very hard. He's got a problem with a virus—got a big problem. And he's—we talked about it today at length. We had a call this morning. And Brazil is shut down, as you know. They weren't going to shut it down, but they had to. So Brazil is shut down.

The world is shut down. Nobody has ever seen anything like this. The entire world is shut down.

You go from having the most powerful economy in the world, and from other countries that are doing well, to being everything is shut down. It's very sad, but we're going to get it going. And we're going to be stronger than ever. I really believe that. We're going to be stronger. We're going to have a big bounce—a very big bounce—when this has gone.

And I just want to thank the American people. I want to thank these great professionals. And I want to thank the media, because really, for the most part, that media has been very fair.

Thank you very much, everybody.

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:35 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to C. Douglas McMillon, president and chief executive officer, Walmart; President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of Mexico; former Secretary of State John F. Kerry; Stanley Chera, founder, Crown Acquisitions; and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Director Fauci referred to Department of Health and Human Services Inspector General Daniel R. Levinson. Reporters referred to President Nicolás Maduro Moros of Venezuela; Jacob Glanville, president and chief executive officer, Distributed

Bio; former Vice President Albert A. Gore, Jr.; and Rodney Howard-Browne, pastor, The River church in Tampa, FL.

*Categories:* Interviews With the News Media : White House Coronavirus Task Force press briefings.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Barr, William P.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Birx, Deborah L.; Bolsonaro, Jair Messias; DeSantis, Ronald D.; DeWine, Mike; Esper, Mark T.; Fauci, Anthony S.; Gilday, Michael M.; Kerry, John F.; López Obrador, Andrés Manuel; McMillon, C. Douglas; Milley, Mark A.; Muhammad bin Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, Crown Prince; O'Brien, Robert C.; Pence, Michael R.; Portman, Robert J.; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Schultz, Karl L.; Wilkie, Robert L., Jr.; Wolf, Chad F.; Xi Jinping.

*Subjects:* Agriculture : Domestic production, strengthening efforts; Armed Forces, U.S. : Funding; Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Armed Forces, U.S. : National Guard; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Brazil : Coronavirus outbreak; Brazil : President; Business and industry : Business leaders, meeting with President; Business and industry : Manufacturing industry :: Government and private sector, coordination efforts; China : Coronavirus outbreak; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; China : Trade agreement with U.S.; China : Trade with U.S.; Commerce, international : Free and fair trade; Communications : News media :: Accuracy and fairness; Communications : News media :: Presidential interviews; Communications : Social media platforms; Defense and national security : Border security; Defense Production Act of 1950, executive authorities; Defense, Department of : Joint Chiefs of Staff; Defense, Department of : Secretary; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic protection efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Addiction treatment and reduction efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Foreign narcotics traffickers; Drug abuse and trafficking : Illegal drugs, interdiction efforts; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Economy, national : Travel and tourism, promotion efforts; Elections : 2020 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Energy : Domestic production, promotion efforts; Energy : Gasoline, oil, and natural gas costs; Florida : Governor; France : Coronavirus outbreak; Government organization and employees : Restructuring and reform; Health and Human Services, Department of : National Institutes of Health; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Experimental drugs and therapies; Health and medical care : Health care workers, service and dedication; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Medical equipment and supplies; Health and medical care : Research and development; Holidays and special observances : Easter; Homeland Security, Department of : Acting Secretary; Homeland Security, Department of : Coast Guard, U.S.; Immigration and naturalization : Foreign nationals and refugees, U.S. admission policy; Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Infrastructure : National, improvement efforts; Iran : Coronavirus outbreak; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iran : Poverty and economic instability; Iran : Regional involvement; Iran : Terrorism, sponsorship; Italy : Coronavirus outbreak; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : President; Navy, Department of the : Naval hospital ships, deployment; Ohio : Governor; Russia : Oil supply and refining; Russia : President; Saudi Arabia : Crown Prince; Saudi Arabia : Oil supply and refining; Spain : Coronavirus outbreak; Sweden : Coronavirus outbreak; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Global threat; Veterans Affairs, Department of : Secretary; White House Coronavirus Task Force; White House Office : Assistants to the President ::

National Security Adviser; White House Office : Coronavirus Response Coordinator; White House Office : Vice President.

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